Newsletter for Birdwatchers

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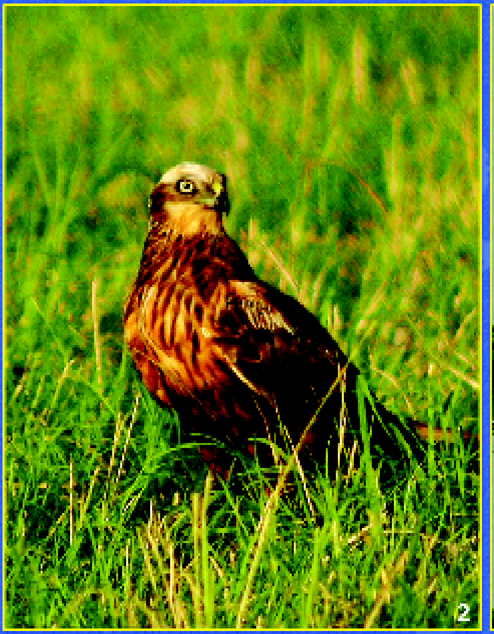

Vol. 49 No. 1 Jan-Feb 2009

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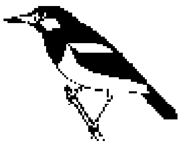

Publisher : S. Sridhar

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Note from the Publisher

Dear fellow Birdwatchers,

Celebrating 200 years of Charles Darwin

During February 2009, naturalists all over the world will be celebrating the 200th birth Anniversary of Charles Darwin, the founder of the theory of evolution. The year 2009 is also the 150th anniversary of the publication of his most famous work *'On the Origin of Species'.*

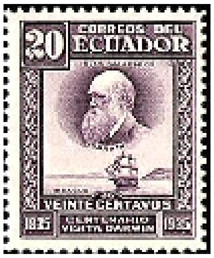
Perhaps the most momentous incident of Darwin's life was the anchoring of *HMS Beagle* on September 16, 1835 at the Galapagos archipelago in the Pacific. Darwin was on board the ship as naturalist, for the observations which he sincerely jotted down gave that fillip to his considered opinion which ultimately led him to formulate his theory of the evolution of species.

Although the English naturalist Charles Darwin was not the first researcher to visit the Galapagos, his name will always be identified with these enchanted islands. It is here in just five short weeks that he found the evidence he sought to crystallize his ideas into a theory, On the Origin of the Species, published in 1859. In this manner, he forever changed the course of the Galapagos Islands history and vividly re-framed our own.

The survey ship *HMS Beagle* was captained by Robert FitzRoy and he and others on board including his companion the young naturalist Charles Darwin made a scientific study of geology and biology on four of the thirteen islands before they left on October 20 to continue on their round-the-world expedition. The governor of the prison colony on Charles Island told Darwin that tortoises differed from island to island, and when specimens of birds were analysed on return to England it was found that many different kinds of birds were species of finches which were also unique to islands. These facts were crucial in Darwin's development of his evolution theory, which was presented in The Origin of Species. Back in London, from 1837, Darwin began to speculate about where species come from.

Darwin - the Original Back-packer?

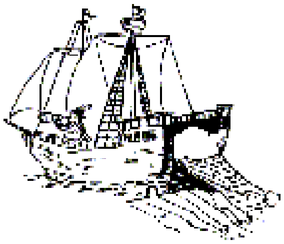
Like many of today's youth, Charles Darwin was in two minds about his future. He had completed a course in medicine at Edinburgh; curiously attending more lectures on geology than medicine! Later, he left for Cambridge University to become a clergy. He returned to his native village Shrewbury, and was still undecided about his future.



It was here that Darwin received a letter from Captain Fitzroy of *HMS Beagle*, inviting him to accompany him on an extended voyage to South America. The prospects of traveling to foreign climes and an opportunity to settle down in life were too tempting for Darwin to refuse and without further ado he signed up for the voyage.

But his father wanted Charles to get a proper job and settle down, rather than wandering the seas aimlessly . Consequently Charles being a dutiful son felt obliged to withdraw his application. Eventually, on learning about the episode, Darwin's uncle Josiah Wedgewood persuaded his brother-in-law to relent and allow Darwin to proceed with the mission. Jubilantly, Darwin conveyed his intention at once to Captain Fitzroy who was about to leave the Lion Hotel in Shrewsbury. Thus a combination of destiny and circumstance enabled Darwin to take up the position of Captain's companion and the rest, as we all know about this original back-packer, is history.

Thanking you,
Your's in bird conservation,
S. Sridhar, *Publisher, NLBW*



A clarification regarding the sighting of Yellow-bellied Prinia (*Prinia flaviventris* Delessert, 1840) – First record in Gujarat

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Yellow-bellied Wren Warbler or Yellow-bellied Prinia (*Prinia flaviventris* Delessert, 1840) belongs to Order: Passeriformes and Family: Cisticolidae. Globally the species is widely distributed over 1,000,000 to 10,000,000 sq. km., believed to be 'frequent' in at least parts of its range (BLI, 2004), evaluated as 'Least Concern' (IUCN, 2007), and native of several countries world over like Brunei Darussalam, Cambodia, China, Hong Kong, India, Indonesia, Lao People's Democratic Republic, Malaysia, Myanmar, Nepal, Pakistan, Singapore, Taiwan, Province of China, Thailand, and VietNam.

The species is said to be a resident and fairly common in the Indian subcontinent (Ali and Ripley, 1995), breeds in various provinces of central Pakistan and Punjab, and N and NE India (mainly in the plains of Indus river system - from Bannu and south of Ambala through Sind) (Ali and Ripley, 1987; Grimmett *et al*., 1999). The species is an altitudinal migrant (800 m to 1200 m asl), inhabits grassland, reeds and bushes near water, breeds in Sind and parts of Indus rivers, Punjab and Haryana (Kazmierczak and Singh, 1998; Kazmierczak, 2000). Although the bird has been reported from various geographical regions of India, it has not been recorded in any part of Gujarat State till date (Parasharya *et al*., 2004). Recently, the bird has been sighted by Mashru and Pandya (2008) in Thol Bird Sanctuary (TBS) of Central Gujarat. In accordance, the present article reveals the sighting *de facto* of the same species by us in Saurashtra province of Gujarat in Khijadiya Bird Sanctuary (KBS) of Jamnagar in the year 2000.

Khijadiya Bird Sanctuary (KBS) is located near the coast of Jamnagar city at a distance of 15 km; amazingly harbour large number of resident and migratory birds. Khijadiya was declared as a sanctuary in May 1981, and spreads over 6.05 sq. km. The sanctuary and its adjoining areas bear a remarkable diversity of habitats and ecosystems including marine habitats, freshwater habitats, marshy lands, mangroves, *Prosopis* scrubs, salt pans, open mudflats, inter-tidal mudflats, creeks, sandy beaches and adjoining farmlands. Due to its high diversity of landscapes, the sanctuary has a rare distinction of having maximum bird species density in the State with more than 220 species in a relatively small area. This diversity has a special conservation value as it supports several globally threatened species such as Dalmatian Pelican, Darter, Asian Openbill Stork, Black-necked Stork, Black-headed Ibis, Eurasian Spoonbill, Pallas's Fish Eagle, Pallid Harrier, Indian Skimmer, Osprey etc. (GSFD, 2008) (Fig. 1).

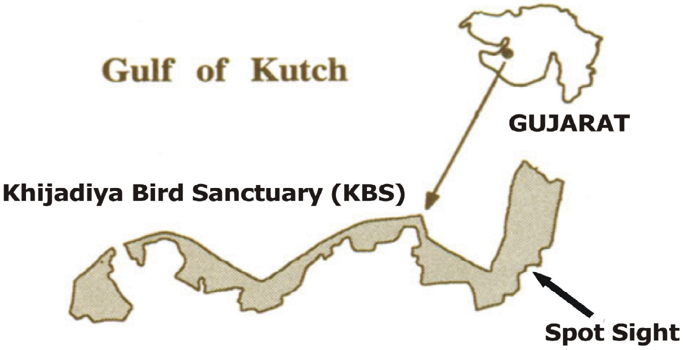

Fig. 1. *Location map of Khijadiya Bird Sanctuary (KBS) and Bird Spot*

As a part of our research project on 'Conservation of Rare and Endangered Biodiversity (CREB) of Gujarat', we were surveying various districts of Gujarat State for documentation of rare and endangered flora and fauna. On 5th November 2000, we were exploring various patches endowed with different habitats in Khijadiya Bird Sanctuary (KBS – Jamnagar, Saurashtra). During our survey, at around 10.35 a.m., we sighted two Prinia-like individuals perching on secondary branch in middle lower canopy of *Acacia nilotica* grown on agricultural hedge proliferated with bush adjacent to inundated field (located about 1 to 1.5 km south of KBS). At first attempt, it was merely not possible for us to identify the species with the naked eyes far from distant spot. Later with the help of a pair of binoculars, the birds were identified by one of us (JJ) as individuals of Yellow-bellied Prinia (*Prinia flaviventris*). The birds were exhibiting the incessant fluttering of wings with upward and downward movement of recurrent flickering tail. We observed such typical behaviour of both the individuals lasted for eight to ten minutes uninterruptedly. The morphological characters depicted in Grimmett *et al*. (1999) and Kazmierczak (2000) associated with typical flickering tail movement and flapping wings substantiated the conformity of the species *viz*. Yellow-bellied Prinia (*Prinia flaviventris*).

In fact, the sighting of Yellow-bellied Prinia (YBP) (*Prinia flaviventris*) by us in November 2000 in KBS (Jamnagar, Saurashtra) is much more prior to its recent sighting from Thol Bird Sanctuary (TBS – Central Gujarat) during April 2008 by Mashru and Pandya (2008). In addition, the report of the same species in KBS has also been integrated as a reconnaissance record by us in the past (Singh *et al*., 2001; 2002a; 2002b). Moreover, as the species is not included in 'A Checklist of the Birds of Gujarat' by Parasharya *et al*. (2004), it should be incorporated in the State Birds' Checklist, either as straggler or vagrant. Furthermore, as the species was sighted initially in KBS (year 2000) in Saurashtra province of Gujarat, and later (year 2008) in TBS of Central Gujarat, it can be inferred that the present population of the species exists as 'Sub-population or Meta-population or Drifting or Relic population' in two different regions of Gujarat State.

Keeping in mind all these facts, the report of sighting of Yellow-bellied Prinia (*Prinia flaviventris*) by us from KBS (Jamnagar, Saurashtra) should be acknowledged as a first record in Gujarat State, and that of Mashru and Pandya (2008) as a first record of YBP in Central Gujarat or subsequent observation of YBP in Gujarat State as a supplementary information. Therefore, our sighting of Yellow-bellied Prinia (*Prinia flaviventris*) should be treated as a first record in Gujarat State, followed by its subsequent report by Mashru and Pandya (2008).

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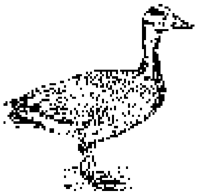

Re-sightings of the Mongolian tagged Bar-headed Geese (*Anser indicus*) in India

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Re-sighting at Gadag, Karnataka:

It was my [Madhukar B (MB)] second visit to Magadi tank in Gadag district since the arrival of Bar-headed Geese (*Anser indicus*) in November 2007. Initially, Madhukar and Mohanram Kemparaju had visited the site. In the second visit Mr. Arun also joined in at the last moment. After a night's stay at Davangere, we left early in the morning at 4 a.m. and reached Magadi village by 7 a.m. on 9th February 2008.

Every year more than 3000 Bar-headed Geese visit the wetlands of Magadi and Shettikere villages. The tank at Magadi is located along the state highway that links Lakshmeshwara to Gadaga. Notably, the water is brackish in these two tanks which are fairly large. There is also a profusion of reed-beds in both the tanks that provide good protection to these winged visitors.In fact, the birds are so comfortable in this place that one may find the birds swimming quietly just a few feet away from the villagers washing their clothes in the tank.

When they sense trouble, the birds always have the option of moving to inaccessible reed beds in the Magadi tank or flying off to the tank at Shettikere, which is almost twice the size of Magadi tank. In fact in January 2008, there was considerable commotion and disturbance when a person drowned in the Magadi tank. The mayhem created by the villagers who scouted in and out of the tank to retrieve the dead body, scared the birds so much so that they quickly moved to the farther end of the tank. The geese leave the tank early in the morning to feed in the surrounding fields, mainly on groundnuts, corns ('jowar' and other grams). They return by 9 a.m. and remain till evening before leaving for their evening snacks.

As there were no birds in the open waters, we went to the other corner of the tank near the village "Holalapoora". The entire flock of Bar-headed Geese had settled at this end on the bank, making their typical siren sounds. There were approximately 1000 birds. This is just a conservative estimate as all birds were not visible from where we stood. Throughout the journey Mohan and I kept talking about the bar-headed geese that were fixed with yellow neck bands and about the photographs of those birds posted by M. Niranjan and Adesh Shivkar from Somanathapur and Pune respectively.

Even as we were musing about the banded geese, Arun shouted excitedly "Hey, look, there is a bird with a yellow neck band!"

We were all thrilled and Mohan took a couple of photographs, whilst I struggled frustratingly to spot the bird myself. Full credit should go to Arun for spotting the bird. Had he not spotted the bird with the neck band, we would not have gathered this record from Magadi tank. A little later the bird came closer to a small opening in the thorny surroundings, which enabled us to "digiscope" (Digital camera fixed to a Telescope) the bird. The image was taken using Digiscoping technique. Swarovski ATS-65-HD spotting scope was used with Nikon Coolpix 8400 camera mounted on Swarovski Digital Camera Base. As a matter of fact, the pictures taken by Mohan were much better than the pictures taken by me. Unfortunately, he deleted these pictures accidentally while trying to get rid of unwanted files in his computer.

It was overall an exciting experience to watch the collared Bar-headed Goose. The next day, we visited Shettikere, where we saw approximately 200 Bar-headed Geese. But, the tank being quite huge and deep-waters made it difficult for us to reach the geese. Perhaps there were a few more birds with the neck bands in these wonderful wetlands of Magadi and Shettikere, but we are not sure.

This Bar-headed Goose (*Anser indicus*) had a neck collar bearing no. C9, and was photographed on 9th February 2008 (see photographs 8a to 8c on back cover) at Magadi Tank, Magadi village, Shirahatti Taluk, Gadag District, Karnataka.. The geographical location of this place is: latitude: 15°13'18"N, longitude: 75°30'56"E, range: 940m.

Re-sighting at Mysore, Karnataka:

On 4th January 2009 after covering a few lakes for Asian Waterfowl Census (AWC), we, namely, Ms. Sahana M, Ms. Girija T, Kishendas KR, Pradeepkumar, Mohankumar M, Kiran M and I (A. Shivaprakash) visited the Kagalipura tank, Mysore (Karnataka) in the evening, as this tank gets the suitable lighting for watching birds in the evening. At 3.15 p.m., we saw a Bar-headed Goose with a yellow neck band with the number C7 printed in black colour on it. This bird was in a flock of 248 Bar-headed Geese. Ms. Sahana M. was the first to photograph the goose with the yellow collar.

It must be mentioned here that at this same tank during last winter season, i.e., on 15th December, 2007, M. Niranjan, an avid birdwatcher, had sighted another Bar-headed Goose with similar collar with number E6.

Re-sighting at Nagpur:

On 11th December 2008, we visited the Paradgaon tank in Nagpur district (Maharashtra) and I (Raju Kasambe) was looking for the re-sighting of the collared Goose, which Aditya Joshi had photographed during the last winter. I was looking out for the same Goose with the neck band. Hence I along with my bird watcher friends, Tarun Balpande, Vishal Choudhary and Kishor Khandekar were checking out each and every Goose with utmost care through our binoculars. On this day we counted 285 Geese on the tank I photographed each Goose with my Canon digital camera for analyzing the pictures at leisure on my computer. In the field we were unable to locate the Goose with collar. However, when I carefully checked the photographs taken by me, on my personal computer, I found the Goose with the yellow collar around its neck! Sadly though the photograph was out of focus and once again the collar number was not discernible.

Many attempts were made by me and other avid birdwatchers from Nagpur, namely Dr. Tarique Sani, Dr. Anil Pimplapure, Vijay Ghuge, Rohan Chakravarty and others to relocate the said collared Goose to examine the collar number, but none could relocate it. One thing we came to know is that there were more than 450 Bar-headed Geese wintering at this Paradgaon tank. Here it must be mentioned that during the last winter also (on 13th December 2007), the collar number was not visible in the photograph taken by Aditya Joshi.

Re-sighting at Chilka ?

Taej Mundkar informed the last author through an email that he saw a Bar-headed Goose in a flock of over 200 Geese on 9th Dec 2008 in the distance with a red (or orange) and white coloured neck band. It was too far to clearly read the number. We need information as to where this goose was banded.

Alert on Tagging of Geese in Mongolia:

Martin Gilbert of Wildlife Conservation Society, in Mongolia has sent following information to Raju Kasambe through an e-mail: This year (2008) we tagged an additional 250 Bar-headed Geese (with green and white collars) in northern Mongolia, so when added to the 50 that were tagged by us last year (2007) there is quite a substantial increase in marked birds. All birds were captured during their summer moult in central and northern Mongolia in July 2008.

Alert on Tagging of Waterbirds in India:

Taej Mundkur, Flyway Programme Manager, Wetlands International, has sent the following information to Raju Kasambe: An international cooperative project has been initiated in Nalbana Island, Chilka Lagoon, Orissa State, on 8th December 2008, as a part of a global programme to improve knowledge on the international movements of waterbirds; interactions between wild and domestic birds and movements of avian influenza viruses in the Central Asian Flyway. It will be undertaken in Orissa, Rajasthan and Tamil Nadu.

It is being jointly undertaken by the Indian Ministry of Environment and Forests, Ministry of Agriculture with technical inputs from the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) India, Bombay Natural History Society (BNHS) and Wetlands International and international experts in bird capture and satellite telemetry from the United States Geological Survey. USAID is funding this project.

Many migratory waterfowl species were marked with specially designed satellite transmitters to study their migratory movements during this programme. Samples were collected from the birds to test for avian influenza and other diseases. The disease surveillance work was carried out at Chilka for one week. To date, all samples collected from wildbirds in Chilka and other parts of India are negative for the highly pathogenic avian influenza H5N1, with confirmatory tests conducted by the High Security Animal Diseases Laboratory, Bhopal. However, additional samples from different bird species from across the country are required to improve our understanding of the distribution pattern of the pathogen.

Regular updates of the satellite tracking of the birds fitted with radio transmitters are being posted on:

http://www.werc.usgs.gov/sattrack/india/overallmaps.html and http://www.werc.usgs.gov/sattrack/india/index.html

Discussion:

Sighting of three Bar-headed Geese with yellow collars fitted by the Wildlife Conservation Society has already been reported from India in the Newsletter for Birdwatchers (Kasambe et. al., 2008). In chronological order, the first Bar-headed Goose was photographed by Aditya Joshi at Paradgaon tank in Nagpur district of Maharashtra on 13th December 2007. However, the collar number of this bird could not be read. The second goose with the collar number E6 was photographed by M. Niranjan at Kaggalipura lake near Somanathpur (near Mysore), in Karnataka on 15th December 2007. The third Goose with collar C6 was photographed by Adesh Shivkar at Veer dam, south of Pune in Maharashtra on 13th January 2008.

The team headed by Martin Gilbert of the Wildlife Conservation Society had tagged 50 Bar-headed in Mongolia (Ref no 1). All the five re-sighting records are from India, of which three are from Karnataka! The one sighted in Nagpur during the last winter and this winter could be the same Goose or a different Goose. Nothing can be concluded on the fidelity if the wintering by Geese at the same sights as the collar number could not be read during the two years in both the photographs. But this additional information about more re-sightings of migratory Bar-headed Geese collared in Mongolia provides strong evidence of migration of many waterfowl species from Mongolia to India.

Acknowledgements:

We thank field colleagues and friends for accompanying us during our bird watching trips. Also thanks to Martin Gilbert of Wildlife Conservation Society, Mongolia for providing data and Taej Mundkur, Flyway Programme Manager, Wetlands International for pursuing the matter on internet and updating the last author about the GAINS program.

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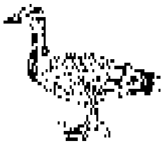
Post-script

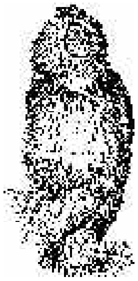
Tarun Balpande, an amateur birdwatcher finally succeeded in photographing the collared Bar-headed Goose at Paradgaon Lake near Nagpur in Maharashtra on 17th January 2009. He was accompanied by Kishor Khandekar, another birder. The Goose has a yellow collar with black lettering written "NU". Martin Gilbert informed me that "NU" was marked as an adult on 17th July 2008 in the Darkhad Valley, Hovsgol aimag (province), Mongolia. The goose is a female. Thus confirming that this goose is different from the one photographed by Aditya Joshi at the same place in last winter (Kasambe, et. al. 2008).

Karthik Thambihalli resighted another collared Bar-headed Goose with yellow collar bearing a number "V9" near Somnathpur near Mysore in January 2009. This Goose was marked as an adult on 13th July 2008 at Sharga Nuur, Bulgan aimag (Province), Mongolia. The bird is a female (pers. com. Martin Gilbert)

Regards,

Raju Kasambe, Nagpur





Records of Avifauna from Gibbon Wildlife Sanctuary, Jorhat, Assam

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Study area: Gibbon Wildlife Sanctuary (26º40’-26º45’N and 94º20’- 94º25"E) encompassing an area of 20.98 km^2, is one of the most important areas of primate diversity in India, with 7 species of primates including hollock gibbon, *Hoolock hoolock* -as the flagship species for conservation. The Wildlife Sanctuary is a mixture of natural as well as plantation as part of introduced regeneration. As per the Champion and Seth (1968) classification of forest types, this wildlife sanctuary is Assam Plains Alluvial Semi Evergreen Forests /2/2B/C sparsely interspersed with wet evergreen forest patches. The vegetation is dominated by tree species like *Dipterocarpus macrocarpus, Artocarpus chaplasha, Amoora wallicii, Michelia spp. Tetramees nudiflora, Sterculia villosa, Castanopsis spp., Mesua ferrea, Dysoxylum procerum, Conarium resiniferum, Terminalia belerica, Gmelina Sp., Pterospermum* l*anceafolium, Vatica lanceafolia, Sapium baccatum, Aquilaria agaliocha, Dillenia indica.* A variety of shrubs and herbs like *Teinosstachyum dullooa, Pseudostachyum polymorphum, Calamus erectus, Calamus spp., Alpinia allughas, Phrynium imbricatum, Laported cremulata* etc. are also abundant in the area.

The present checklist (Table 1) has been prepared from regular visits to the area during the period of 2000 to 2004, with a minimum of four visits per year, covering all the habitats.

Present threats to the Sanctuary: Historically, Gibbon Wildlife Sanctuary was a continued part of Patkai range foothill forests. However, after the establishment of tea gardens during early twentieth century, the forest became discontinued from other forests of the foothill. The Sanctuary is now separated from the nearest forest areas of Dissoi Valley Reserve Forests of Nagaland by a vast stretch of tea gardens. Presently, the Sanctuary is an isolated patch of forest, surrounded from all sides by tea gardens and human habitation. This becomes a barrier for the effective migration of wildlife, including elephants, giving rise to continuous man-elephant conflicts. Moreover, a railway line bissects the Sanctuary into two unequal fragments. Wildlife causalities have often been reported due to trains moving through the area. Threats to the bird community include nest predation by primate species like hoolock gibbon and rhesus macaque and the use of chemical pesticides in the tea gardens at the periphery of the Sanctuary which eventually enters the food chain through insectivorous birds.

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Sl. No.	Common Name	Scientific Name	Status&Season	
1	Little Grebe	*Tachybaptus ruficollis*	R,3	A
2	Little Cormorant	*Phalacrocorax niger*	R,4	A
3	Darter	*Anhinga melanogaster*	R,3	A
4	Little Egret	*Egretta garzetta*	R,3	A
5	Median Egret	*Mesophoyx intermedia*	R,2	A
6	Cattle Egret	*Bubulcus ibis*	R,4	A
7	Indian Pond-Heron	*Ardeola grayii*	R,4	A
8	Chinese Pond-Heron	*Ardeola bacchus*	R,3	A
9	Black-Crowned Night Heron	*Nycticorax nycticorax*	R,2	A
10	Chestnut Bittern	*Ixobrychus cinnamomeus*	R,2	A
11	Asian Openbill-Stork	*Anastomus oscitans*	R,3	A
12	Lesser Adjutant-Stork	*Leptoptilos javanicus*	R,2	A
13	Lesser Whistling-Duck	*Dendrocygna javanica*	R, 3	A
14	Oriental Honey-Buzzard	*Pernis ptilorhynchus*	R,3	A
15	Black-Shouldered Kite	*Elanus caeruleus*	R,2	A
16	Indian White-backed Vulture	*Gyps bengalensis*	R,1	A
17	Slenderbilled Vulture	*Gyps tenuirostris*	R,1	A
18	Himalayan Griffon	*Gyps himalayensis*	M,1	W
19	Red-headed Vulture	*Sarcogyps calvus*	R,1	A
20	Crested Serpent-Eagle	*Spilornis cheela*	R,B,3	A
21	Crested Goshawk	*Accipiter trivirgatus*	R,1	A
22	Shikra	*Accipiter badius*	R,B,2	A
23	Besra Sparrowhawk	*Accipiter virgatus*	R,B,3	A
24	Rufous-bellied Eagle	*Hieratus kienerii*	R,1	A

25	Changeable Hawk-Eagle	*Spizaetus cirrhatus*	R,2	A
26	Common Kestrel	*Falco tinnunculus*	M,1	W
27	Red Junglefowl	*Gallus gallus*	R,B,4	A
28	Kaleej Pheasant	*Lophura leucomelanos*	R,B,4	A
29	White-breasted Waterhen	*Amaurornis phoenicurus*	R,B,4	A
30	Purple Moorhen	*Porphyrio porphyrio*	R,B,3	A
31	Common Moorhen	*Gallinula chloropus*	R,B,3	A
32	Common Coot	*Fulica atra*	Un,2	A
33	Bronze-winged Jacana	*Metopidius indicus*	R,B,2	A
34	Red-wattled Lapwing	*Vanellus indicus*	R,3	A
35	Green Sandpiper	*Tringa ochropus*	M,3	W
36	Blue Rock Pigeon	*Columba livia*	R,3	A
37	Spotted Dove	*Streptopelia chinensis*	R,B,4	A
38	Red Collared Dove	*Streptopelia tranquebarica*	R,3	A
39	Emerald Dove	*Chalcophaps indica*	R,2	A
40	Pin-tailed Green Pigeon	*Treron apicauda*	R,2	A
41	Green Imperial-Pigeon	*Ducula aenea*	R,3	A
42	Alexandrine Parakeet	*Psittacula eupatria*	R,2	A
43	Rose-ringed Parakeet	*Psittacula krameri*	R,3	A
44	Red-breasted Parakeet	*Psittacula alexandri*	R,4	A
45	Pied Crested Cuckoo	*Clamator jacobinus*	M,2	S
46	Brainfever Bird	*Hierococcyx varius*	R,2	A
47	Indian Cuckoo	*Cuculus micropterus*	R,2	A
48	Common Cuckoo	*Cuculus canorus*	M,2	S
49	Drongo Cuckoo	*Surniculus lugubris*	M,1	S
50	Asian Koel	*Eudynamys scolopacea*	R,B,3	A
51	Greater Coucal	*Centropus sinensis*	R,B,3	A
52	Collared Scops-Owl	*Otus bakkamoena*	R,2	A
53	Brown Fish-Owl	*Ketupa zeylonensis*	R,B,2	A
54	Spotted Owl	*Athene brama*	R,B,3	A
55	Brown Hawk-Owl	*Ninox scutulata*	R,2	A
56	Indian Jungle Nightjar	*Caprimulgus indicus*	R,1	A
57	Large-tailed Nightjar	*Caprimulgus macrurus*	R,2	A
58	Asian palm-Swift	*Cypsiurus balasiensis*	R,3	A
59	Red-headed Trogon	*Harpactes erythrocephalus*	Un,1	A
60	Small Blue Kingfisher	*Alcedo atthis*	R,2	A
61	Storkbilled Kingfisher	*Halcyon capensis*	R,2	A
62	White-breasted Kingfisher	*Halcyon smyrnensis*	R,3	A
63	Lesser Pied Kingfisher	*Ceryle rudis*	R,2	A
64	Small Bee-eater	*Merops orientalis*	R,3	A
65	Blue-tailed Bee-eater	*Merops philippinus*	M,2	S
66	Indian Roller	*Coracias bengalensis*	R,2	A
67	Common Hoopoe	*Upupa epops*	R,2	A
68	Oriental Pied Hornbill	*Anthracoceros albirostris*	R,B,2	A
69	Lineated barbet	*Megalaima lineata asiatica*	R,3	A
70	Blue-throated Barbet	*Megalaima asiatica*	R,3	A
71	Coppersmith Barbet	*Megalaima haemacephala*	R,3	A
72	Speckled Piculet	*Picumnus innominatus*	R,2	A
73	Grey-capped Pigmy Woodpecker	*Dendrocopos nanus*	R,2	A
74	Rufous Woodpecker	*Celeus brachyurus*	R, 2	A
75	Common Golden-backed Woodpecker	*Dinopium javanense*	R, 2	A
76	Greater Golden-backed Woodpecker	*Chrysocolaptes lucidus*	R,3	A
77	Pale-headed Woodpecker	*Gecinulus grantia*	R,2	A
78	Small Yellow-naped Woodpecker	*Picus chlorolophus*	R, 2	A
79	Common Swallow	*Hirundo rustica*	M,2	S?
80	White Wagtail	*Motacilla alba*	M,3	W
81	Citrine Wagtail	*Motacilla citreola*	M,2	W
82	Grey wagtail	*Motacilla cinerea*	M,2	W
83	Paddyfield Pipit	*Anthus rufulus*	R,2	A
84	Small Minivet	*Pericrocotus cinnamomeus*	R	A
85	Longtailed Minivet	*Pericrocotus ethologus*	M	W
86	Short-billed Minivet	*Pericrocotus brevirostris*	M	W
87	Scarlet Minivet	*Pericrocotus flammeus*		A
88	Black-crested Bulbul	*Pycnonotus melanicterus*	R,2	A
89	Red-whiskered Bulbul	*Pycnonotus jocosus*	R,B,3	
90	Red-vented Bulbul	*Pycnonotus cafer*	R,B,4	A
91	Common Iora	*Aegithina tiphia*	R,B,2	A
92	Gold-fronted Chloropsis	*Chloropsis aurifrons*	R,2	A
93	Orange-bellied Chloropsis	*Chloropsis hardwickii*	R,2	A
94	Asian Fairy-Bluebird	*Irena puella*	R,1	A
95	Brown Shrike	*Lanius cristatus*	M,2	WA
96	Rufous-backed Shrike	*Lanius schach*	M,3	W
97	Grey-backed Shrike	*Lanius tephronotus*	M,3	W
98	Blue Whistling Thrush	*Myiophonus caeruleus*	M,1	W
99	Oriental Magpie-Robin	*Copsychus saularis*	R,3	A
100	White-rumped Shama	*Copsychus malabaricus*	R,1	A
101	Lesser Necklaced Laughingthrush	*Garrulax monileger*	R,2	A
102	Rufous-capped Babbler	*Stachyris ruficeps*	R,2	A
103	Yellow-eyed Babbler	*Chrysomma sinense*	R,2	A
104	Thick-billed Warbler	*Acrocephalus aedon*	M,	W
105	Common Tailorbird	*Orthotomus sutorius*	R,B,3	A
106	Greenish Leaf-Warbler	*Phylloscopus trochiloides*	R,	A
107	Sooty Flycatcher	*Muscicapa sibirica*	M	S
108	Ferruginous Flycatcher	*Muscicapa ferruginea*	SM	A
109	Red-throated Flycatcher	*Ficedula parva*	M	W
110	Small Niltava	*Niltava macgrigoriae*	M	S
111	Rufous-bellied Niltava	*Niltava sundara*	M	W
112	Grey-headed flycatcher	*Culicicapa ceylonensis*	M	W
113	Asian Paradise Flycatcher	*Terpsiphone paradisi*	M,2	S

114	Black-napped Monarch Flycatcher	*Hypothymis azurea*	R,2	A
115	White-throated Fantail-Flycatcher	*Rhipidura albicollis*	R,2	A
116	Great Tit	*Parus major*	R,3	A
117	Sultan Tit	*Melanochlora sultanea*	R,2	A
118	Plain Flowerpecker	*Dicaeum concolor*	R	A
119	Scarlet-backed Flowerpecker	*Dicaeum cruentatum*	R	A
120	Purple Sunbird	*Nectarinia asiatica*	M,2	W
121	Blackthroated Sunbird	*Aethopyga saturata*	M	W
122	Crimson Sunbird	*Aethopyga siparaja*	R	A
123	Streaked Spiderhunter	*Arachnothera magna*	R	A
124	Oriental White-eye	*Zosterops palpebrosus*	R,3	A
125	White-rumped Munia	*Lonchura striata*	R,2	A
126	Spotted Munia	*Lonchura punctuata*	R,B,3	A
127	House Sparrow	*Passer domesticus*	R,3	A
128	Eurasian Tree Sparrow	*Passer montanus*	R,2	A
129	Grey-headed Starling	*Sturnus malabaricus*	R,2	A
130	Asian Pied Starling	*Sturnus contra*	R,3	A
131	Common Myna	*Acridotheres tristis*	R,4	A
132	Jungle Myna	*Acridotheres fuscus*	R,3	A
133	Common Hill Myna	*Gracula religiosa*	R,B,2	A
134	Black-headed Oriole	*Oriolus xanthornus*	R,3	A
135	Black Drongo	*Dicrurus macrocercus*	R,3	A
136	Crow-billed Drongo	*Dicrurus leucophaeus*	M,2	S
137	Bronzed Drongo	*Dicrurus aeneus*	R,2	A
138	Lesser Racket-tailed Drongo	*Dicrurus remifer*	R,3	A
139	Spangled Drongo	*Dicrurus hottentotus*	R,2	A
140	Indian Treepie	*Dendrocitta vagabunda*	R,3	A
141	House Crow	*Corvus splendens*	R,4	A
142	Large-billed Crow	*Corvus macrorhynchos*	R,4	A

Status:

R - Resident M **- Migratory** B **-Breeding**
Un - Unknown, not confirm
1 - Rare **2** - Less common **3** - Common
4 - Very common

Season:

S Summer **W** Winter **A** Throughout the year

Occurrence of the Crimson-breasted Barbet *(Megalaima rubricapillus malabarica,* Blyth) in the Ajmer Moist Deciduous Forest Ecosystem

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Topographically, Ajmer lies between 26^{0} 25' and 26^{0} 29' North latitude and 74^{0}37' and 74^{0} East longitude. The area is characterised by Aravallis ranges of varying heights and the plateau, on which Ajmer stands marks the highest point in the plane of India. The highest point of Taragarh is 2,855 *feet* above *sea level* and 1200 *feet* above the valley below. To the south-west of Taragarh stands the most prominent range of hills – the Nag Pahar, overlooking the entire valley of Ajmer.

The plant communities growing are (Dhank), *Anogeissus pendula;* (Chaprend), *Grewia flavesons*, (Gangera), *(G. tenax);* (Dansaria) *(Rhus mysorensis)*, (Babul), *Acacia nilotica*, (Salar), *Boswellia serrata*, (Zinza), *Bauhinia racemosa,* (Karonda) C*arissa carandas*, and (Dhak), *Butea monosperma*.

Barbets are resident birds of Ajmer moist deciduous Forest Ecosystem. The Biology of Indian Barbets have been published by Yahya (2001). The book is an attempt to compile existing information of Indian Barbets of the Indian Subcontinent except from Rajasthan. Since the information on the distribution of Barbets in Rajasthan is not available, we decided to takeup an extensive systematic field study, with reference to Barbet *species*.

The methods for the intensive study period on the general habits, ecology and behaviour were followed by Yahya (2001).

The Barbet *species*, identified, Crimson-breasted Barbet, *Megalaima rubricapillus malabarica* (Blyth) (Order : Piciformes ; family : Capitonidae) (Hindi : Tatera Basantha) has been recorded by us during the visit in March – April, 2007 to February – March, 2008, in the Tadgarh Raoli Wildlife Sanctuary, Ajmer, for the first time on the following descriptions largely based on Ali and Ripley (1983).

Overall grass green; throat and crown Crimson, breast streaked with black, and a crimson patch below eyes. Abdomen and vent light green, sides of throat light blue and upper breast yellowish. Tail somewhat rounded. Sexes alike.

Iris brown. Bill upper mandible horny brown, lower pale-flesh colour at chin, plumbeous at gape and sides except near terminal portion which is brownish. Legs and feet coral pink, claws horny brown.

They are the most vociferous birds of the Forest. Voice and calls: *Tuk-tuk or tunk – tunk*, etc., repeated monotonously for many minutes, a trifle softer and also quicker in tempo.

They were found to be frugivores and voracious feeders and keep on feeding throughout the day. They are entirely arboreal birds and never descend to the ground. They prefers smaller- sized fruits-Banyan (*Ficus benghalensis*) ; Peepal (*F. religiosa*); Gular (*F. glomerata*), Angir (*F. carica*) and Phalsa (*Grewia asiatica*). These fruits constitute the main food.

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CORRESPONDENCE

FIRST RECORD OF BLUE-EARED KINGFISHER ALCEDO MENINTING FROM KONKAN,

by Sachin Balkrishna Palkar, Member of the Sahyadri Nisrga Mitra,Chiplun,NearD.B.J.College, Sathybhama sadan, Mumbai-Goa Highway, House no.100, A/P-Chiplun, District – Ratnagiri. Maharashtra, 415 605. Email: - sachinbpalkar82@gmail.com.

Kingfishers belong to the Alcedinidae family. In all six types of kingfishers are recorded in Chiplun city (Konkan), Ratnagiri Dist, Maharashtra, India.

On the 7th October 2008, my friend Sunil Gouraje brought an injured kingfisher. He had collected the kingfisher from Lote-Parshuram Industrial Area, which is about 8 kms away from Chiplun city. I suspected the kingfisher to have dashed against a fast moving vehicle or hit itself against a white-wall under smoggy conditions. At a glance, it looked like a Small Blue kingfisher *Alcedo atthis*, but soon I realized that it was the Blue-eared Kingfisher *Alcedo meninting.* After some force-feeding, the kingfisher regained its strength and was able to fly on its own.

There are no previous records of this species in Konkan. It is the first record from Konkan. This species is found in Nepal, Sikkim, Bhutan, Assam, Nagaland, Manipur, East Pakistan, Wes Bengal, Orissa, the humid Western Ghats-strip in Goa, Karnataka, Tamil Nadu (Nilgiri Hills) and Kerala (Ali, Ripley, 1983).

Acknowledgment. I thank Ram Vasudeo Mone for taking the photographs of the Blue-eared Kingfisher.(Photo 6a on Back Cover Phot 6b : Small Blue kingfisher *Alcedo atthis)*

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Pamela C. Ramussen & John C. Anderton.(2005), Birds of South Asia, The Ripley Guide. Lynx Editions. National Museum of Natural History. Smithsonian Institution.

UNUSUSAL BEHAVIOUR OF INDIAN PITTA,

by Sachin Balkrishna Palkar, Member of the Sahyadri Nisrga Mitra,Chiplun,NearD.B.J.College, Sathybhama sadan, Mumbai-Goa Highway, House no.100, A/P-Chiplun, District – Ratnagiri. Maharashtra, 415 605. Email: - sachinbpalkar82@gmail.com.

Indian Pitta belongs to Pittidae family, one of the beautiful birds visiting Konkan for breeding. From the year 2000 we studied this bird in and around Chiplun city, district of Ratnagiri. Data regarding its breeding biology has already been published in Indian Birds (2:3.2007).

On 5-5-2003, 13-5-2007 and 20-6-2008, between 14-00 and 14-30 hrs we observed the unusual behaviour of this bird at three different sites. Pairs of this bird were seen chasing each other continuously for five minutes at a stretch. Then one of the birds sat suddenly on the ground. It touched the ground with its belly and remained spread-eagled, as can be seen from the photographs 7a to 7c printed on the back cover. The bird remained in this way on the ground for about a minute or so before flying away. What was the reason behind this peculiar behaviour? During that period there were no rains but the sky was cloudy.

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Breeding notes of six species of birds from Chiplun, Ratnagiri and Maharashtra, India

Pande Satish A (2001), Newsletter for Birdwatchers Vol 41:4. 48-49, Nesting of *Pitta brachyura* in the Konkan, Maharashtra.

PREDATORS ON THE WINGS, *by DR. V. RAMAKANTHA, IFS , Institute of Wood Science and Technology (IWST), 18th Cross, Malleshwaram, Bangalore - 560 003.*

On a misty morning, while perambulating the forests of Nagaraholey, I sighted a Changeable Hawk Eagle (*Nisaetus cirrhatus*). It was sitting bolt upright amidst the mist shrouded foliage of a fruiting tree. I knew that nothing escapes the binocular vision of this predator. However, the diehard optimist in me prompted me to pull my gypsy close to the tree. The bird did not move. I lifted my camera, ever so slowly, focused my lens on the yellow iris of the bird; exhaled and clicked. I could not believe my luck when the bird showed reluctance to fly away, as it usually does under slightest provocation, the very sight of a human being, a cause.

After having exposed many frames, I had nothing else to do than to admire the details of the bird that was sitting motionless. After a minute or so I realized the reason for the nonchalant behavior of the bird. The hawk came alive, and swooped on the forest floor with whirlwind rush. We heard loud protests from a jungle fowl and her brood, foraging within 20 meters from the tree. They were lucky to get into the tangled vegetation of the forests before being caught by the powerful talons of the mighty raptor. The eagle flapped its wings and flew away amidst tall trees, searching for yet another vantage point.

Like all forest eagles, the Changeable Hawk Eagle has its own area of operation in the jungle, to which it keeps. This bird feeds on peafowls, jungle fowls, partridges, lizards, field rats etc. The female hawk eagle is a trifle larger than the male and is known to lay just a single egg each year. She probably knows that nature cannot take care of many of her kind at a time, and goes for a small family norm.

The Changeable Hawk Eagle is found all over India and I was privileged to sight this raptor in the deciduous forests in the Indo-Myanmar border area. Myanmar and Thailand form the extra limital existence of the bird.

In the adjoining Bandipur National park, I could witness the hunting prowess of a Crested Serpent Eagle (*Spilornis cheela*), an equally large predator. As I watched, the bird picked up a meter long snake from the forest floor, and flew back to its perch, which incidentally was at an ideal distance for photography. However, by the time I managed to suppress my undue excitement, focus on the bird and managed to click, the snake had reached its ill-fated destination. I could but capture the saintly look on the bird.

The all-black feathers of the Black Eagle (*Ictinaetus malayensis)* make it easy to identify this large raptor, that one can easily sight over a forest canopy in the hilly tracts of India. Once I had observed this raptor making a kill, but it was far away for me to record many things. Ever since, if a Giant Malabar Squirrel gets agitated on the branch of a tree for no apparent reason, I always thought that there ought to be a Black Eagle over the canopy (well, it could be any other large raptor, but it is the Black Eagle that I have sighted most often over the canopy of the Western Ghats)

Shikra (*Accipiter badius*) is the commonest hawk in India. This bird of prey can be found in scrub forests as well as human altered environments, including the concrete jungles. Once we could see the extraordinary hunting prowess of a Shikra, right within the compound of our house at Bidar town in northern Karnataka. We first saw a Rock Pigeon scampering on the ground in our verandah. Before we realized as to why this bird was running rather than fly, we saw a Shikra striking the pigeon with lightning speed. Soon the hawk started plucking the plumage of its victim, choosing to ignore our presence about 15 meters away.

The Shikra fed on and off, as we could see from the window. The bird seemed to have an enormous appetite. It kept itself close to the carcass till evening. Before sun set, presuming that the bird had eaten its fill I quietly moved to the verandah and started to click photographs. For quite a while the Shikra appeared unconcerned, for it continued to feed. As I made my moves to get into the house, the raptor lifted the pigeon in its powerful claws and flew across the compound wall. It landed low on a branch of a tree beyond. I did not pursue her any further.

A few years later, while residing at the well vegetated Forest Campus in Coimbatore city in Tamil Nadu, I had the privilege of observing this diurnal hunter on day to day basis. One afternoon I heard a chorus of alarm calls of Yellowbilled Babblers (*Turdoides affinis*) coming from my garden. On investigating, I saw a male Shikra trapped between the wire meshes of my compound. Within the furls of the wire mesh was a dead babbler, obviously killed by the raptor. The babblers were near by, creating a ruckus. The Shikra was probably trying for long to escape from the entanglement of the barbed wire, and was too terrified to concentrate on its meal. It became much more agitated on my arrival. I did my bit to help the bird extricate itself from the tangle. The predator flew away.

I presumed that having almost lost its life getting stuck in the wire mesh, the Shikra dared not appear again on the scene to retrieve its meal. Nevertheless, I left the dead babbler where it was, and retired. In matter of minutes the mourning of the babblers too ceased.

Out of curiosity, I investigated the scene about half an hour later. There was no sign of the dead babbler within the folds of the wire mesh. On further search I observed a few ash coloured feathers under a *Prosopis* tree, not far from the scene of action. Then I saw a Shikra flying away from the canopy of the very same tree, holding something in its talons. It became obvious that the predator had dared the trappings of the wire mesh, and had recovered its hard gained meal.

TYPICAL BEHAVIOUR OF VULTURES

by A.M.K..BHAROS, B-101 Gayatrinagar, PO; Shankernagar, RAIPUR. CG, 492 007.

During a visit to the Pench National Park in May 2004, mixed congregation of Indian white backed vultures (Gyps bengalensis) and Indian long billed vultures (Gyps indicus) was seen at Alikatta and Dhaminikatta submergence area. At Alikatta six White backed vultures were seen perched atop a dry tree, whereas at Dhaminikatta twelve white backed and six long billed vultures were seen on ground. Sighting of such a population of vultures at a place, these days in itself is quite satisfying.

However the feature of the sighting was, that out of the congregation of eighteen birds sitting on the open ground, twelve birds were in normal posture, except one with drooping neck and head, but the other six were lying flat on their bellies with necks stretched to full. The birds were observed for quite some time but there was minimum movement. One of the birds lying flat further stretched its neck to full. Looking to this, for a moment it was taken that the birds are not in normal health condition. The time was around 9.30 AM. There appeared no food around the congregation. After watching them for about 15 minutes we proceeded further ahead. The site was revisited around 5 PM, but at the spot no vulture living or dead was seen. Evidently the birds had left the spot.

The species has been observed in the past also and its behaviour studied, but their lying flat on ground with stretched necks as described above was not observed earlier. This inexplicable behaviour needs explanation.

INDIAN SKIMMERS RYNCHOPS ALBICOLLIS IN THE BHUTNI DIARA ISLAND, MALDA DISTRICT, WEST BENGAL, INDIA,

by ARUNAYAN SHARMA, Centre for Ecological Engineering, Netaji Subhash Road, In front of T.O.P, Malda – 732 101, West Bengal. Email :arunayan@gmail.com

I was doing an assessment survey on circuit embankment of Bhutni Diara Island on 3rd February 2008. This island is located in between the Rajmahal (Jharkhand) in its western side and in the Manikchak block (Malda district, West Bengal) in its eastern side. The Bhutni Diara Island is the largest and oldest (c. 700 years) river-island having an area of c. 60 sq km., formed amidst the river Ganges by the natural phenomenon of siltation in the western part of Malda district of West Bengal surrounded by channels of the river in its all sides. The island is protected by circuit embankment (c. 26km long) constructed in 1976 for the protection of settler's inhabitants has changed the behaviour of the river Ganges in this region which has increased the frequency and severity of floods and riverbank erosions in its downstream in Malda district (Sharma 2004 & 2006).

During the survey at Nanditala of this island at 1140hrs, I sighted three Indian Skimmers *Rynchops albicollis* hovering along the riverbank. After sometime (at 1315hrs) another pair Indian Skimmers was seen foraging along the circuit embankment c. 2,000m further north from Nanditala. On the same day at 1520hrs in the northern part of the island at Bilaimari five more individuals were sighted at the confluence of main channel of the river Ganges and river Koshi. During the complete survey of circuit embankment along the island in all ten individuals of Indian Skimmers were recorded from different locations of this island, separated by considerable distances from each other. In another trip to this island on 7th February 2008, ten Indian Skimmers were recorded from various locations. Three individuals from Khaskol at 1020hrs and five individuals from Hiranandapur at 1450hrs. On the same day during the return trip from the island towards the mainland in Manikchak at around 1610hrs a pair of Indian Skimmers was sighted hovering above the waterline on the river Ganges very close to the island. It is quite possible that they were the same groups sighted earlier on 3rd February 2008 (Table 1).

Table 1. Sighting records of Indian Skimmers *Rynchops albicollis* from *Bhutni Diara Island*, Malda district, West Bengal.

Date	Time	Location	Number
3.2. 2008	1140hrs	Nanditala	Three
3.2. 2008	1315hrs	2km north from Nanditala	Two
3.2.2008	1520hrs	Bilaimari	Five
7.2. 2008	1020hrs	Khaskol	Three
7.2. 2008	1450hrs	Hiranandapur	Five
7.2. 2008	1610hrs	Island Bankline	Two

The Indian Skimmer *Rynchops albicollis* is a Globally Threatened species designated as Vulnerable. The Globally Threatened Indian Skimmer *Rynchops albicollis* has a large range with an estimated global Extent of Occurrence of 252,000 km². Its global population is estimated to be between 6,000 and 10,000 individuals (Wetlands International 2002). This species is listed as Vulnerable because its population is undergoing a rapid decline as a result of widespread degradation and disturbance of lowland rivers and lakes. Global population trends have been quantified as declining. The species has now approached the thresholds for the population decline criterion of the IUCN Red List (i.e. declining more than 30% in ten years or three generations). For these reasons, the species is evaluated as Vulnerable (BirdLife International 2008). Range and population of Indian Skimmer is confined to Pakistan and

India, north of c.16°N, Bangladesh, where a large proportion of the population of this species winters, principally in the Padma-Meghna delta and Myanmar. It is a rare visitor to Nepal. It was formerly widely distributed across the Indian subcontinent, along the major rivers of Myanmar and along the Mekong in Indo-China. It has declined drastically in India and Pakistan (BirdLife International 2008).

In India its distribution range is mainly confined along the river Ganges. In the North Bengal (towards north from Malda district) the species has been recorded from the Sankosh River of Buxa Tiger Reserve (Inglis *et al* 1920) in Jalpaiguri district and along the Ganges river system up to Farakka Barrage (c. 20km downstream of *Bhutni Diara Island*) in Malda district (Jha 2006, Sharma 2001). In the South Bengal (towards south from Murshidabad district) the species has been recorded from the Chattaranjan Bara Dam and from Purbashtali-Ganges Islets in Burdwan district (Bombay Natural History Society 2008, Sharma 2007). However (Majumdar *et al* 1992) haven't recorded this species from the Malda district.

The *Bhutni Diara Island* is an unexplored ornithological area of Malda district. This is the first time the Indian Skimmers has been recorded from the western part of Malda district from the *Bhunti Diara Island* reveals avifaunal importance of this island which is subject to constant flood and riverbank erosion, a major threat for the habitat of this species. In the process of flood and riverbank erosion many small islands are emerged amidst the river Ganges (Sharma 2004 & 2006) in this region which is suitable habitats of this species. Out of that it was found that the *Bhutni Diara Island* is an excellent refuge for Indian Skimmers**.** There is a possibility of this species either breeding in this Gangetic flood plains or it could be that they have extended their range along the Gangetic belts of Malda district, West Bengal.

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AVIFAUNA OF ECO-PARK OF IOC BARAUNI REFINERY BEGUSARI BIHAR,

by D.N. Choudhary, A. Mishra, R. Rohitashwa, T.K. Pan, S. Agarwal and T.K.Ghosh. Mandar Nature Club, Anand Cidkitsalaya Road, Bhagalpur, Bihar, 812 002.

Avifauna of Eco-Park of IOC, Barauni Refinery have been studied by a team of naturalists and keen birdwatchers of Mandar Nature club, Bhagalpur, Bihar (An NGO working for the conservation of environment and wildlife since 1990) during a project work sectioned by the IOC, Barauni Refinery, Bihar. During this project birds were identified, nesting as well as breading behavior was also studied carefully. After that a checklist of Avifauna was prepared.

Barauni Refinery is one of the nine crude oil refineries of Indian Oil Corporation (IOC) Ltd, India, established in 1964 on the northern bank of river Ganga at Barauni in Begusari District of Bihar. It is near Begusari town situated at 25° 28' N and 85°50' E.

The beautiful Eco-park has been established by IOC, Barauni Refinery on 1st September 1996 inside the security zone of Biological Treatment plant (BTP) extending about 75 acres. Though it is a man-made park, it has a rich biodiversity of its own. It has now become a conservation site for a large number of flora and fauna especially the avifauna. This park is an important refuge for the birds, because it is very close to Mokama Tal, River Ganga and the nationally famous Kawar Lake. Incidentally Kawar Lake is one of the largest bird sanctuaries of Bihar (Choudhary et.al, 2005) , which is situated about 15 kms away from this park. Mokama Tal gets submerged during monsoon and presents a vast stretch of water body. Due to the unique biodiversity of Mokama Tal and Kawar Lake, both the wetlands have been declared as IBA of Bihar (Islam and Rahmani, 2004). The avian population of the Eco-park is directly or indirectly influenced by these two Wetlands.

The authorities have developed two artificial ponds (North pond and East pond) for receiving the treated effluents discharged from BTP at the refinery and the ponds are surrounded by undisturbed vegetation. A small forest like habitat has been created on a side of these water bodies providing a good roosting site for a variety of birds. The water depth in the North pond is about 2.5' and in the East pond it is about 6'. A recently developed herbal garden and the zones designated as Jantu Vihar, Jal Vihar, Kala Vihar, Puspak Vihar, Parabhat Vihar are the other attractions for the visitors to the Eco-Park. The park has a diverse habitat of trees, shrubs, herbs, climbers, bamboos and flowering plants. Another attraction is the ornamental plants garden. Grassland vegetation is another attraction for wildlife especially the grassland birds. The trees in Eco-park mainly Shisham *(Dalbergia sissoo)*, Banyan (Ficus bengalensis) Arjun *(Terminalia arjuna)* Shemul *(Salmalia malabarica)* Babul *(Acacia sp.)* and Subabool *(Leucaena leucocephala)* are preferred by the birds for roosting and breeding.

The park has a luxuriant growth of *Typha* on the margin of the ponds. Aquatic vegetation like *Hydrilla, Vallisneria, Azoalla, Ceratophylum, Spirodilla* are also recorded in the ponds.

Avifauna Studied

We recorded some 89 species of birds (both resident and migratory) during our project work entitled Documentation of Fauna and Flora of Eco-park of IOC Barauni Refinery assigned by IOC Barauni between February 2005 and March 2006, including a few previous and recent visits to the park. The 89 species recorded belong to 34 families. The family wise break up is as follows: - Mucidae-9, anatidae-8, Accipitridae, Charidridae, Cuculadae and Motacillidae-5 each, Columbiadae, Capaitonidae, Meropidae, Oriolide, Phalacrocoradcidae and Podicipedidae-2 each and best one each of the family we recorded 23 migratory species in the park area belong to Anatidae-6, Caridridae and Motacillidae-4 each, Mucicapidae-3 and from Accipitridae, Cuculidae, Rallidae, Podicipedae, Hirundinidae and Laridae one each.

The Eco Park has also become a breeding site for a large number of birds, out of 66 resident species of birds, breeding has been recorded for 21 species by us during our study period. There is also a fine heronry inside the Eco-park. We could record active nests with eggs, chicks and juveniles of many species in the heronry. Many birds were found indulging in courtship displays. Nesting and breeding behaviors were also studied and their photographs taken carefully. Nesting and breeding observations are being tabulated and the same will be communicated later.

The birds have been identified based on the publications by Ali & Ripley, 1989; Grimmet *etal,* 1999, using our binoculars (Minolta 9x50 and Canon 10x40).

Conclusion

After going through the species list we can conclude that Eco-park of IOC Barauni Rifinery is a significant habitat for birds. It has become a permanent shelter for a large number of resident as well as migratory birds. It has proved that how the world of avifauna can be developed anywhere, by providing ideal conditions. Despite their involvement in trading of crude oil refining, best possible conservation efforts have been applied here in protecting the birds and their habitat. Eco park of IOC Barauni Rifinery is an example as to how best a little spot can be developed into an asylum for these feathered friends. This certainly is a matter of delight.

Acknowledgement

We are thankful to IOC Barauni Rifinery Bihar, for sanctioning this project for the study and documentation of flora and fauna of Eco park. We are highly grateful to Anand Kumar the then G.M. (Technical) for taking special interest in our works. We also thank R. Prasad (Chief Technical Officer) and B.S. Rajan for providing us the required facilities during our field studies. We are also thankful to caretakers of IOC Guest house for providing us good hospitality during our stay.

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CHECKLIST OF AVIFAUNA OF ECO-PARK OF IOC BARAUNI REFINERY

Sl.	Common Name	Zool. Name	Status
1.	Lesser Whistling Teal	*Dendrcygna javanica*	R
2.	Cotton Teal	*Nettapus coromandelianus*	R
3.	Mallard	*Anas platyrhynchos*	M
4.	Common Teal	*Anas crecca*	M
5.	Garganey	*Anas querquedula*	M
6.	Pintail	*Anas acuta*	M
7.	Shoveller	*Anas clypeata*	M
8.	White-eyed Pochard	*Aythyca Nyroca*	M
9.	Rufous Woodpecker	*Micropternus brachyurus*	R

10.	Black Rumped Flameback	*Dinopium benghalense*	R
11.	Brown Headed Barbet	*Megalaima zeylanica*	R
12.	Coppersmith Barbet	*Megalaima haemacephala*	R
13.	Grey Hornbill	*Tockus birostris*	R
14.	Hoopoe	*Upupa epops*	R
15.	Indian Roller	*Coracias benghalensis*	R
16.	Common Kingfisher	*Alcedo atthis*	R
17.	White Breasted Kingfisher	*Halcyon smyrnensis*	R
18.	Lesser Pied Kingfisher	*Ceryle rudis*	R
19.	Green Bee Eater	*Merops orientalis*	R
20.	Blue Tailed Bee Eater	*Merops philippinus*	R
21.	Pied Crested Cuckoo	*Clamator jacobinus*	M
22.	Common Hawk Cuckoo	*Cuculus varius*	R
23.	Indian Plaintive Cuckoo	*Cacomantis passerinus*	R
24.	Koel	*Eudynamys scolopacea*	R
25.	Crow Pheasant	*Centropus sinensis*	R
26.	Rose Ringed Parakeet	*Psittacula krameri*	R
27.	House Swift	*Apus affinis*	R
28.	Palm Swift	*Cypsiurus parvus*	R
29.	Spotted Owlet	*Athene brama*	R
30.	Blue Rock Pigeon	*Columba livia*	R
31.	Spotted Dove	*Streptopelia chinensis*	R
32.	Indian Ring Dove	*Streptopelia decaocto*	R
33.	Yellow Legged GreenPigeon	*Treron phoenicoptera*	R
34.	White Breasted Waterhen	*Amaurornis phoenicurus*	R
35.	Moorhen	*Gallinula chloropus*	R
36.	Coot	*Fulica atra*	M
37.	Green Sandpiper	*Tringa ochropus*	M
38.	Wood Sandpiper	*Tringa glareola*	M
39.	Common Sandpiper	*Tringa hypoleucos*	M
40.	Black Winged Stilt	*Himantopus himantopus*	R
41.	Little Ringed Plover	*Charadrius dubius*	M
42.	Redwattled Lapwing	*Vanellus indicus*	R
43.	Black Headed Gull	*Larus ridibundus*	M
44.	Pariah Kite	*Milvus migrans govinda*	R
45.	Crested Serpent Eagle	*Spilornis cheela*	R
46.	Shikra	*Accipiter badius*	R
47.	Honey Buzzard	*Pernis ptilorhynchus*	
48.	Booted Hawk Eagle	*Hieraaetus badius*	M
49.	Little Grebe	*Tachybaptus pennatus*	R
50.	Great Crested Grebe	*Podiceps cristatus*	M
51.	Darter	*Anhinga rufa*	R
52.	Little Cormorant	*Phalacrocorax niger*	R
53.	Little Egret	*Egretta garzetta*	R
54.	Smaller Egret	*Egretta intermedia*	R
55.	Cattle Egret	*Bubulcus ibis*	R
56.	Yellow Fronted Pied Woodpecker	*Picoides mahrattensis*	R
57.	Pond Heron	*Ardeola grayii*	R
58.	Night Heron	*Nycticorax nycticorax*	R
59.	Rufous Backed Shrike	*Lanius schach*	R
60.	Indian Tree Pie	*Dendrocitta vagabunda*	R
61.	*House Crow*	*Corvus splendens*	R
62.	Jungle Crow	*Corvus macrorhynchos*	R
63.	Golden Oriole	*Oriolus oriolus*	R
64.	Black Headed Oriole	*Oriolus xanthornus*	R
65.	Black Drongo	*Dicrurus adsimilis*	R
66.	Paradise Flycatcher	*Terpsiphone paradisi*	R
67.	White Throated Fantail	*Rhipidura albicollis*	R
68.	Red Breasted Flycatcher	*Muscicapa parva*	M
69.	Magpie Robin	*Copsychus saularis*	R
70.	Black Redstart	*Phoenicurus ochruros*	M
71.	Grey Headed Myna	*Sturnus malabaricus*	R
72.	Brahminy Myna	*Sturnus pagodarum*	R
73.	Pied Myna	*Sturnus contra*	R
74.	Common Myna	*Acridotheres tristis*	R
75.	Grey Tit	*Parus major*	R
76.	Swallow	*Hirundo rustica*	M
77.	Red Vented Bulbul	*Pycnonotus cafer*	R
78.	Plain Wren-warbler	*Prinia subflava*	R
79.	Tailor Bird	*Orthotomus sutorius*	R
80.	Dusky Leaf Warbler	*Phylloscopus fuscatus*	M
81.	Jungle Babbler	*Turdoides striatus*	R
82.	Purple Sunbird	*Nectarinia asiatica*	R
83.	House Sparrow	*Passer domesticus*	R
84.	White Wagtail	*Motacilla alba*	M
85.	Large Pied Wagtail	*Motacilla maderaspatensis*	R
86.	Yellow Headed Wagtail	*Motacilla citreola*	M
87.	Yellow Wagtail	*Motacilla flava*	M
88.	Indian Tree Pipit	*Anthus hodgsoni*	M
89.	White Eye	*Zosterops palpebrosa*	R

SIGHTING OF GREATER FLAMINGOS IN MADIWALA LAKE, BANGALORE, *by HARISH BHAT, Center for Ecological Sciences, Indian Institute of Science, Bangalore 560 012*

Please find attached the two snaps of Greater Flamingos, that visited to Madiwala lake, Bangalore on 14th of May, 2008. These unusual snaps were taken by Mr. Ganesh V. Rao, RFO, Banashankri Range. This sighting of Greater Flamingo flock is quite rare in Bangalore City.

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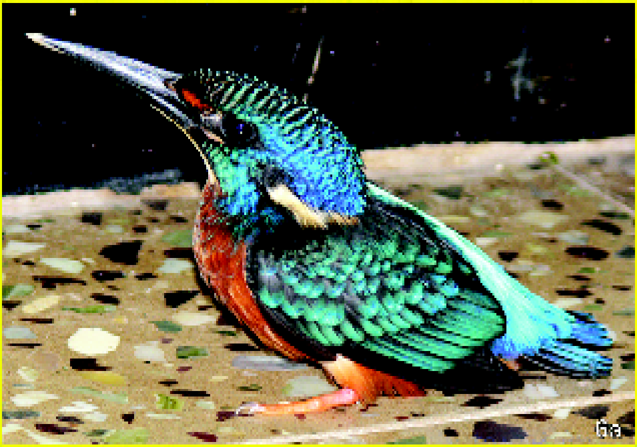
Front Cover: **A Raptor Portfolio :** Photo1: Changeable Hawk-Eagle *(Spizaetus cirrhatus)*, 2: Marsh Harrier *(Circus aeruginosus)*, 3: Black-shouldered Kite *(Elanus caeruleus)*, 4: Tawny Eagle *(Aquila rapax),* 5: Egyptian Vulture *(Neophron percnopterus).* All photographs by **Ashish Parmar**

Back Cover: Photo 6a: Blue-eared Kingfisher *(Alcedo meninting),* 6b : Small-blue Kingfisher *(Alcedo atthis),* 7a to c : Indian Pitta *(Pitta brachyura).* For details read correspondences by Sachin B Palkar.

Photographs 8a to c : Tagged Bar-headed Geese *(Anser indicus)* at Magadi Tank. For details read article by Madhukar B, *et. al.*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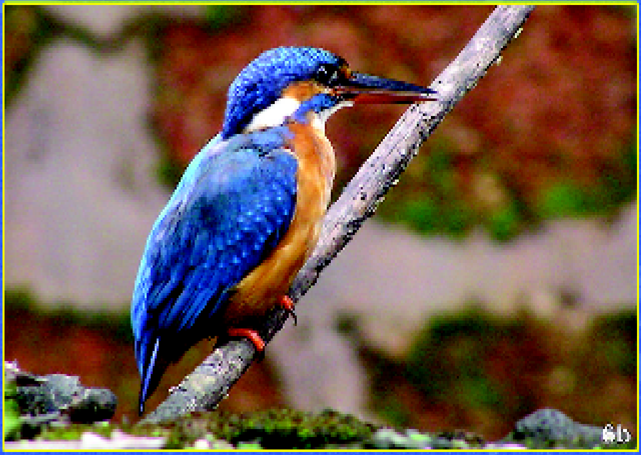
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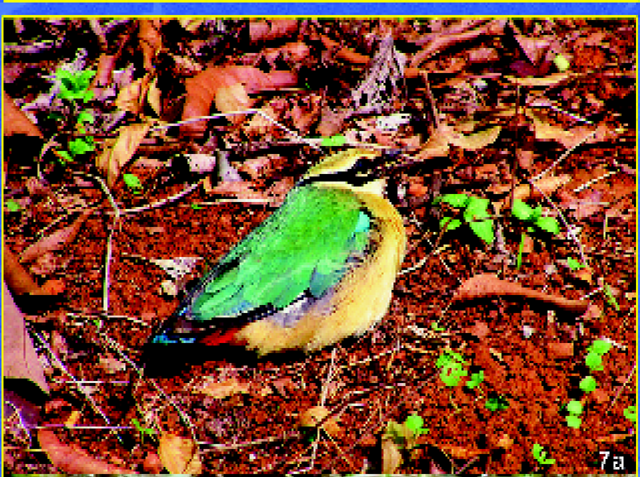
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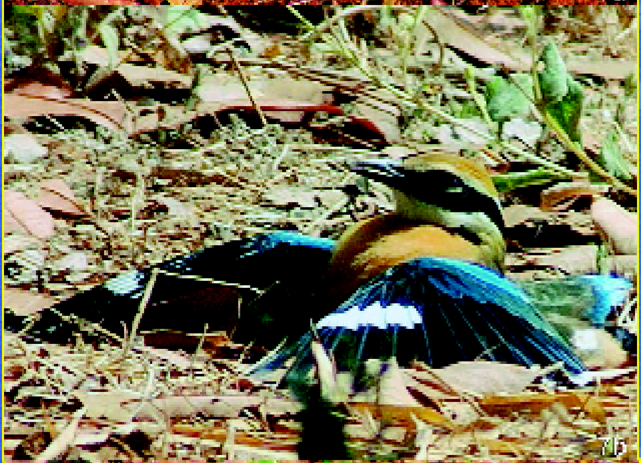
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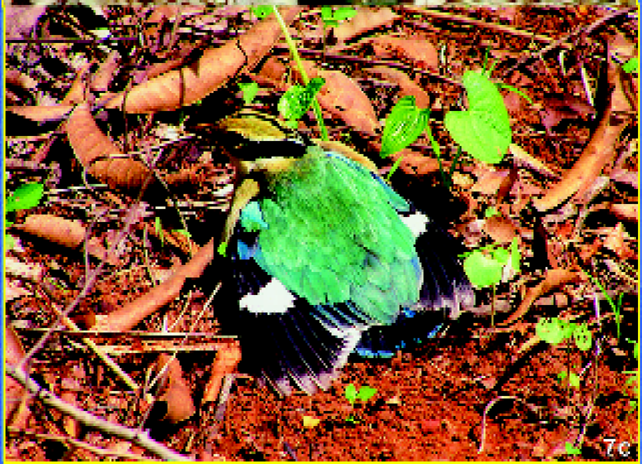
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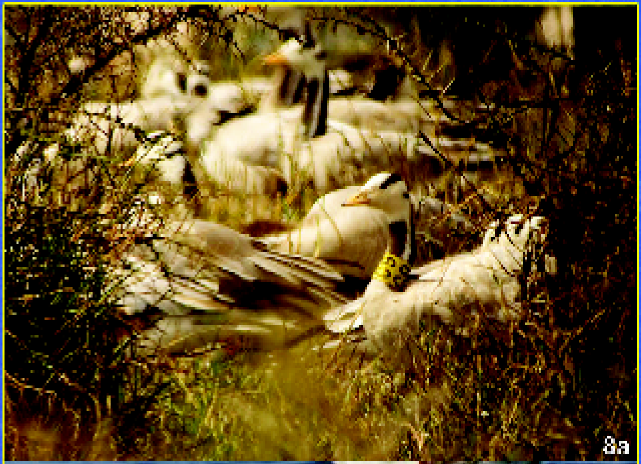
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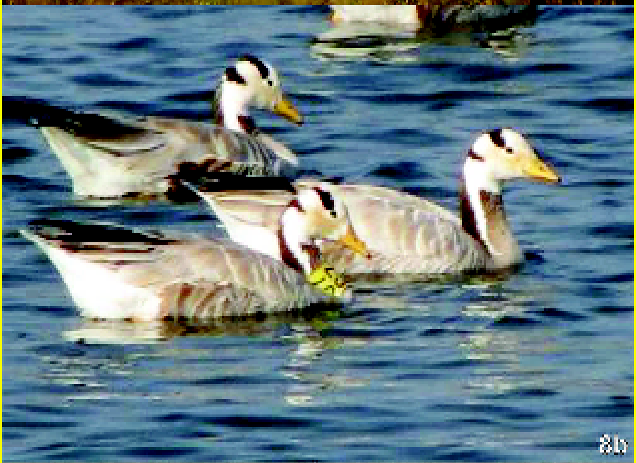
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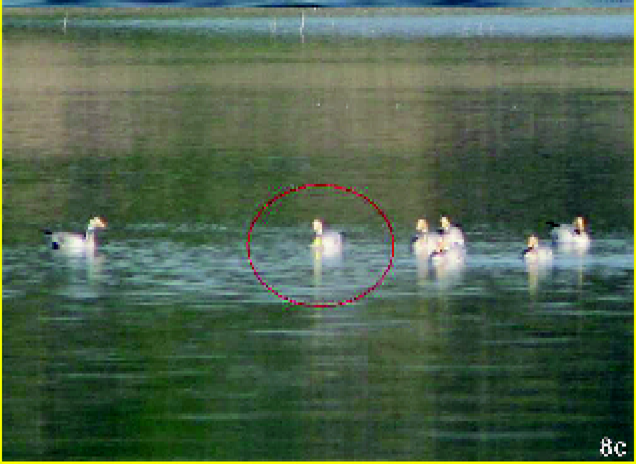
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